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A Biographical Study of Samuel

Harold Willmington

Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

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Samuel

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

- I. The pre-ministry of Samuel—A boy in the tabernacle
 - A. Hannah was his mother.
 1. Her prayer for her son
 - a. Samuel was born as a result of God's answering Hannah's prayer and touching her barren womb (1 Sam. 1:2, 19, 20).
 - b. He was promised to the Lord even before his birth (1 Sam. 1:10-12).
 - c. He became the second of two famous Old Testament Nazarites. Samson was the first (Judg. 13:7, 13-14; 1 Sam. 1:11).
 2. Her presentation of her son—After he was weaned, Hannah dedicated him in the tabernacle (1 Sam. 1:23-28).
 - B. Eli was his mentor.
 1. He then was raised for God's service by the old priest Eli in the tabernacle (1 Sam. 2:11, 18, 21).
 2. He was visited yearly by his mother and presented with new clothes (1 Sam. 2:19).
- II. The ministry of Samuel—A prophet in the land
 - A. Samuel, the anointed—Samuel and his God
 1. His call
 - a. Samuel, like Jesus in the New Testament, grew in stature and in favor with God and men (Compare 1 Sam. 2:26; 3:1 with Luke 2:52).
 - b. God spoke to Samuel one night as the lad lay on his cot in the tabernacle (1 Sam. 3:1-14).
 - (1) He mistook the voice of God for that of Eli on the first two occasions.
 - (2) Realizing what was happening, Eli advised Samuel to answer the mysterious voice on the next occasion with the words: "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth" (1 Sam. 3:9).
 - (3) Samuel did this and heard a fearful message from God concerning the future divinely caused deaths of Eli's two wicked sons.
 - c. The next morning Samuel related all this to Eli (1 Sam. 3:15-18).
 - d. Samuel now began a very fruitful ministry as a prophet (1 Sam. 3:19-21).
 - (1) God let none of his words fall to the ground.
 - (2) All of Israel recognized him as a great prophet.
 - (3) God continued to reveal himself to Samuel.
 2. His covenant—Samuel led Israel in a great revival (1 Sam. 7:1-13).
 - a. He ordered the people to assemble at Mizpeh.
 - b. The Philistines attacked this assembled crowd but were destroyed by God.
 - c. Samuel then set aside a large rock to commemorate all this, naming it

Ebenezer, meaning “hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

3. His circuit—He established a circuit-riding ministry, traveling from Beth-el to Gilgal to Mizpeh, judging Israel in all these places (1 Sam. 7:15-16).
 4. His city—Ramah became his home and headquarters (1 Sam. 7:17).
- B. Samuel, the anointer—Samuel and Saul
1. Events leading to the crowning of Saul
 - a. The request by Israel
 - (1) When he grew older, Samuel unwisely appointed his ungodly sons, Joel and Abiah, as judges over Israel (1 Sam. 8:1-3).
 - (2) Because of this and other reasons, the leaders of Israel demanded that Samuel appoint a king to rule over them (1 Sam. 8:4-5).
 - b. The revelation from God
 - (1) Samuel was displeased at this request, but was told by God Israel had rejected their heavenly king and not their earthly prophet (1 Sam. 8:6-7).
 - (2) God then instructed Samuel to grant their request, but to warn them of the consequences (1 Sam. 8:8-21).
 - (a) The king would make soldiers of their sons.
 - (b) Others would be forced into farming the ground
 - (c) Their daughters would become the king’s cooks and bakers.
 - (d) He would take the best of their fields, vineyards, and olive groves.
 - (e) They would have a 10 percent tax enforced upon them.
 - (3) In spite of all these warnings, Israel still demanded a king!
 - (4) God told Samuel a man from the tribe of Benjamin would knock on his door the next day seeking information concerning some lost animals. The man’s name was Saul and he would become Israel’s first king (1 Sam. 9:1-18).
 - c. The reassurance to Saul
 - (1) When Saul arrived, Samuel told him all this and anointed him with oil (1 Sam. 9:19–10:1)
 - (2) Samuel then gave Saul four signs to confirm his divine selection (1 Sam. 10:2-7).
 - (a) Two men would greet him at Rachel’s tomb.
 - (b) Three men would greet him by the plain of Tabor.
 - (c) A procession of prophets would greet him at Gibeah.
 - (d) Finally, Saul himself would be led by the holy Spirit to prophesy with them.

d. The review by Samuel

- (1) Samuel publicly anointed Saul at Mizpeh (1 Sam. 10:17-24).
- (2) He then explained and reviewed for the people the regulations of the kingship and wrote them down (1 Sam. 10:25).
- (3) After Saul had proven himself in battle (1 Sam. 11:1-11), Samuel once again gathered the people, this time at Gilgal, to reaffirm the kingship (1 Sam. 11:14-15).
- (4) At this time he delivered his final public speech (1 Sam. 12:1-25).
 - (a) He reminded Israel of his faithful service to their nation.
 - (b) He reminded them of God's faithfulness in the past and chided them for demanding a king.
 - (c) He urged them to serve God from that day on.
 - (d) He warned them of the consequences of disobedience.
 - (e) He promised to pray for them.
 - (f) He validated his message by praying down a thunder and rain storm.

2. Events following Saul's coronation

- (1) The rejection of Israel's first king—Saul was set aside by God for two reasons.
 - (a) For doing what he should not have done—Samuel severely rebuked Saul at Gilgal for intruding into the office of the priesthood by offering up a burnt sacrifice (1 Sam. 13:8-14).
 - i. Samuel told him his kingdom would not continue.
 - ii. God himself had sought out a man after his own heart.
 - (b) For not doing what he should have done—By order of the Lord, Samuel instructed Saul to attack the Amalekites and destroy everything, both people and livestock (1 Sam. 15:1-35).
 - i. Saul disobeyed by sparing Agag, king of the Amalekites, and the best of the livestock (1 Sam. 15:7-9).
 - ii. Samuel learned of all this from the Lord, who was grieved over Saul's disobedience. This caused the prophet to weep all that night (1 Sam. 15:10-11).
 - iii. When Samuel confronted Saul about this on the following day, the disobedient king lied about it (1 Sam. 15:12-13).
 - iv. He then attempted to shift the blame concerning why he had saved the best of the animals to the people,

saying . . . “The people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord” (1 Sam. 15:15).

- v. Upon hearing this Samuel utterly condemned Saul, saying . . . “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king” (1 Sam. 15:22-23).
- vi. As Samuel turned to leave, Saul caught hold of his robe and tore it. Samuel told him God would likewise tear the kingdom from him and give it to one of the king’s neighbors (1 Sam. 15:27-29).
- vii. Samuel then personally executed King Agag (1 Sam. 15:32-33).
- viii. This was the final meeting between Samuel and Saul before the death of the prophet (1 Sam. 15:34-35).

(2) The selection of Israel’s finest king

- (a) Samuel was instructed to visit the home of Jesse in Bethlehem and anoint a new king (1 Sam. 16:1).
- (b) Following Samuel’s instructions, Jesse paraded his seven sons before the prophet, but none was selected by God (1 Sam. 16:4-10).
- (c) Jesse’s youngest son was finally brought in from the sheep pasture. At God’s command, Samuel anointed this lad, David, as Israel’s new king (1 Sam. 16:11-13).
- (d) Later David visited Samuel during that time when Saul was attempting to kill him (1 Sam. 19:18).

III. The post-ministry of Samuel—A voice from the grave

A. The desperation of Saul

- 1. All Israel’s leaders assembled at Ramah when Samuel died to mourn and honor their great prophet (1 Sam. 25:1; 28:3).
- 2. Sometime later a desperate Saul succeeded in contacting Samuel from the grave that he might ask the prophet concerning the outcome of a battle with the Philistines (1 Sam. 28:10-14).

B. The condemnation by Samuel—Samuel’s stern answer was devastating to Saul (1 Sam. 28:15-20).

- 1. He reminded the king that God had rejected him because of disobedience.
- 2. He stated David would soon be Israel’s new king.

3. He predicted Saul would not only be defeated in battle, but that both he and his sons would be killed!

THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

- I. Samuel probably wrote most of the material found in 1 Samuel and 1 Chronicles (1 Chron. 29:29-30).
- II. The psalmist mentioned Samuel along with Moses and Aaron as three examples of God's faithfulness (Psa. 99:6).
- III. Jeremiah referred to Samuel, along with Moses, to emphasize Israel's tragic sinful condition. "Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth (Jer. 15:1).
- IV. Simon Peter used Samuel as a source of authority concerning the Messiah during his sermon by the temple gate called Beautiful (Acts 3:24).
- V. Paul referred to Samuel during his message to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:20).
- VI. The author of Hebrews referred to the great faith of Samuel (Heb. 11:32).

STATISTICS

Father: Elkanah (1 Sam. 1:19-20)

Mother: Hannah (1 Sam. 1:19-20)

Sons: Joel and Abiah (1 Sam. 8:1-3)

Brothers: Three brothers (1 Sam. 2:21)

Sisters: Two sisters (1 Sam. 2:21)

First mention: 1 Samuel 1:20

Final mention: Hebrews 11:32

Meaning of his name: "Hand of God"

Frequency of his name: Referred to 134 times

Biblical books mentioning him: Seven books (1 Samuel, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Psalms, Jeremiah, Acts, Hebrews)

Occupation: Prophet and priest (1 Sam. 3:1, 20)

Place of birth: Near Mt. Ephraim (1 Sam. 1:1, 19-20)

Place of death: Ramah (1 Sam. 25:1)

Important fact about his life: He anointed both Saul and David as king over Israel (1 Sam. 9:27 — 10:1; 16:13).